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Ahn

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(54) **POLARITON MODE OPTICAL SWITCH**

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H01L 29/06 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **257/9**; 257/E31.128; 257/E31.033;
438/69; 977/755

(58) **Field of Classification Search** 257/9, E31.127,
257/E31.033; 438/69; 977/755
See application file for complete search history.

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

Devices, methods, and techniques for frequency-dependent optical switching are provided. In one embodiment, a device includes a substrate, a first and a second optical-field confining structures located on the substrate, and a quantum structure disposed between the first and the second optical-field confining structures. The first optical-field confining structure may include a surface to receive photons. The second optical-field confining structure may be spaced apart from the first optical-field confining structure. The first and the second optical-field confining structures may be configured to substantially confine therebetween an optical field of the photons.

27 Claims, 9 Drawing Sheets

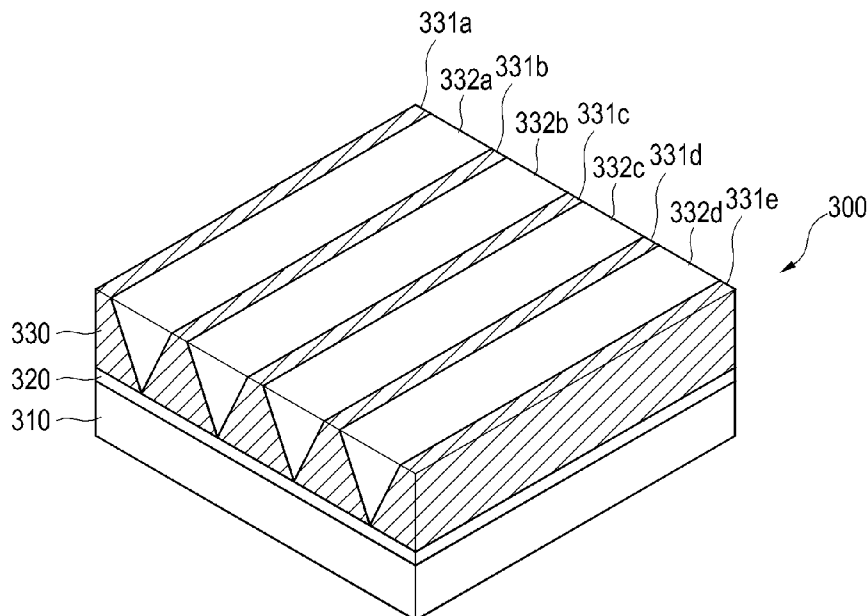


FIG. 1

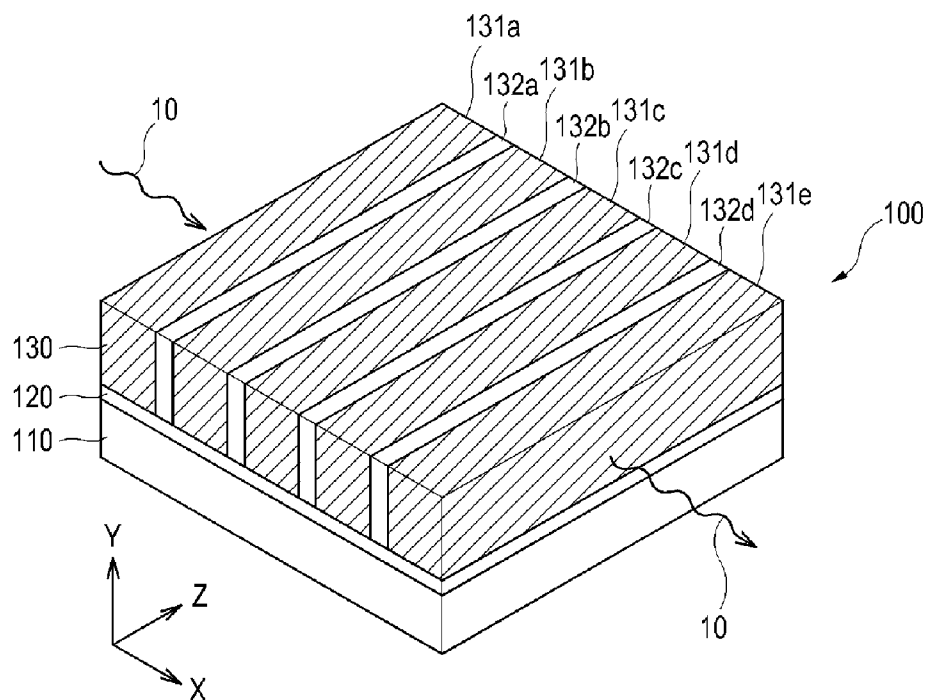


FIG. 2

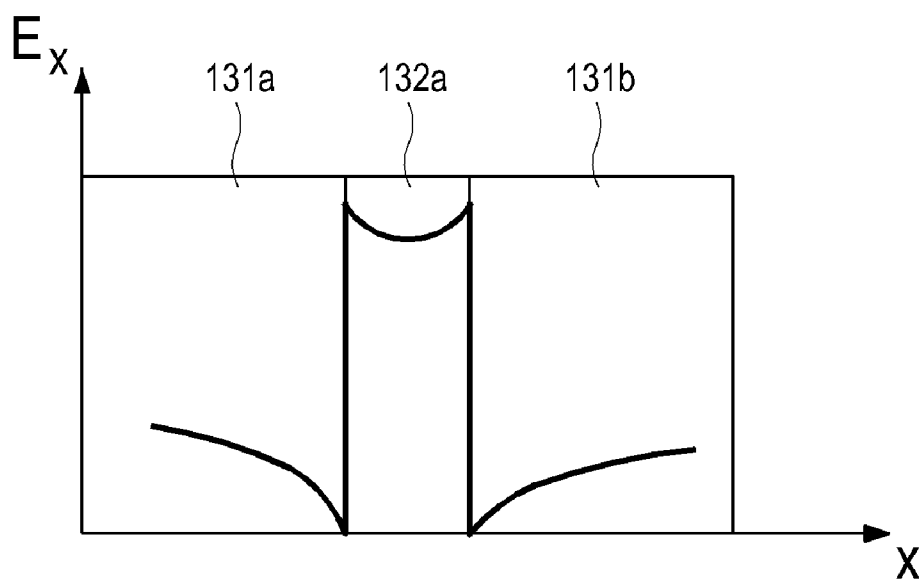


FIG. 3

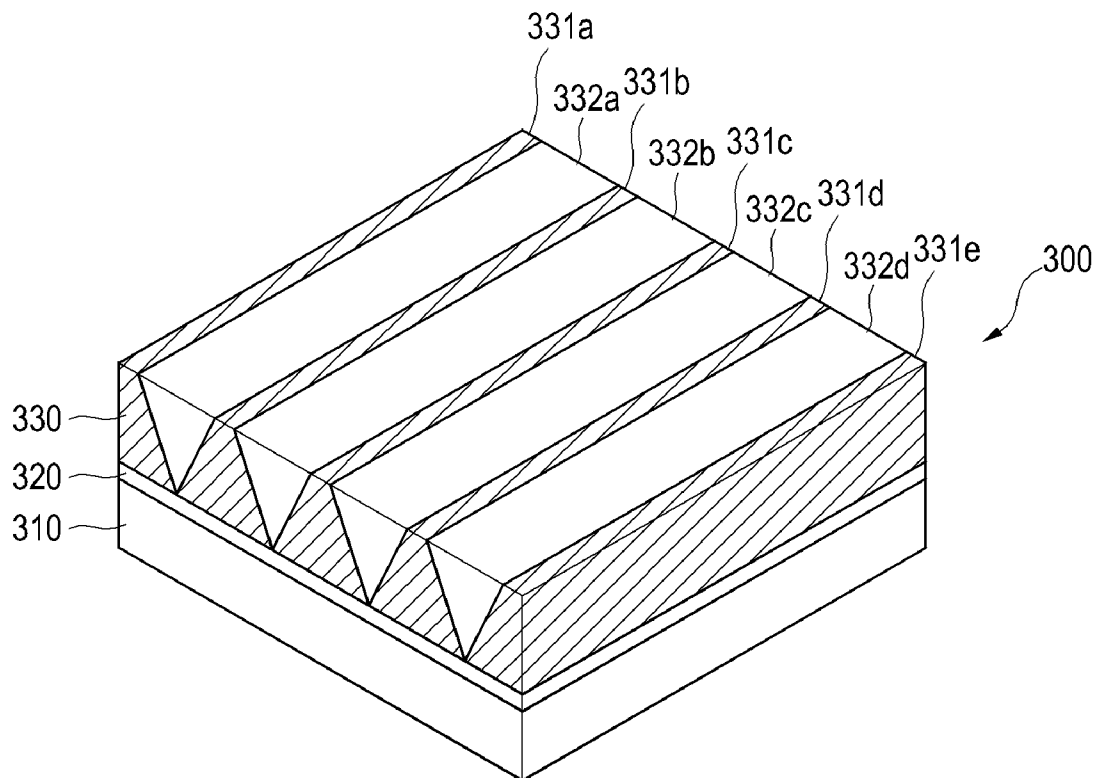


FIG. 4

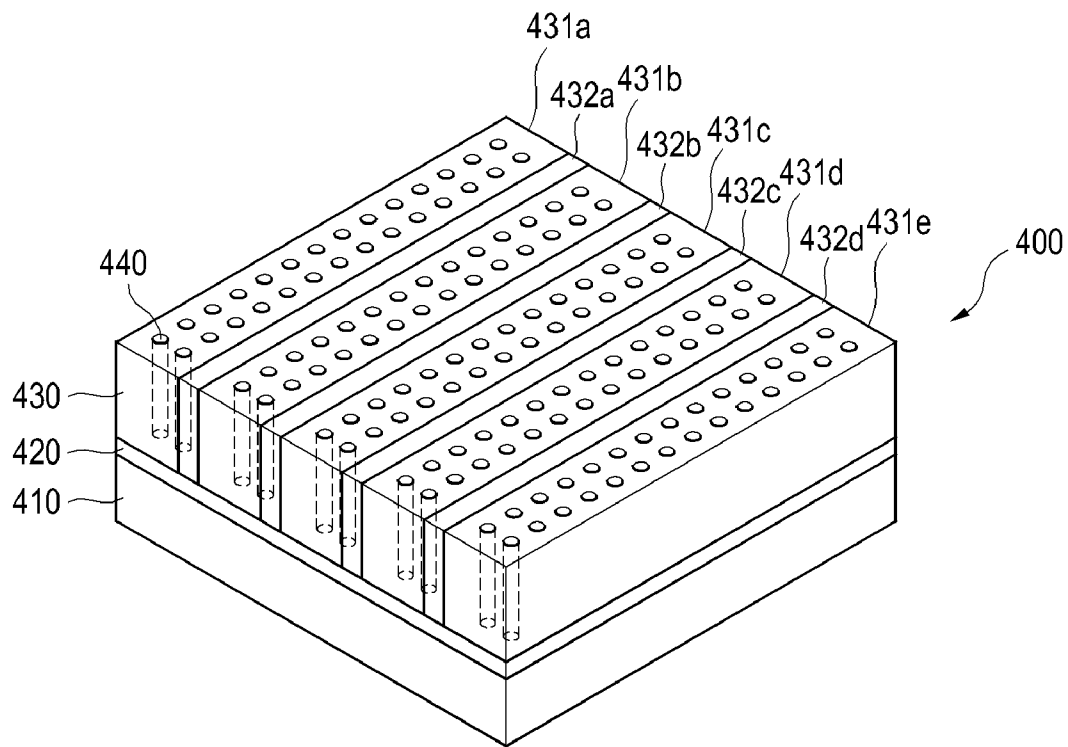


FIG. 5

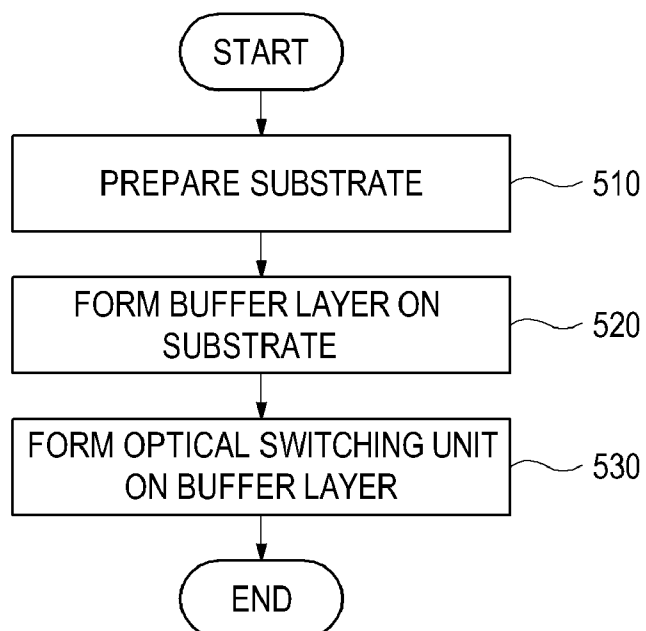


FIG. 6

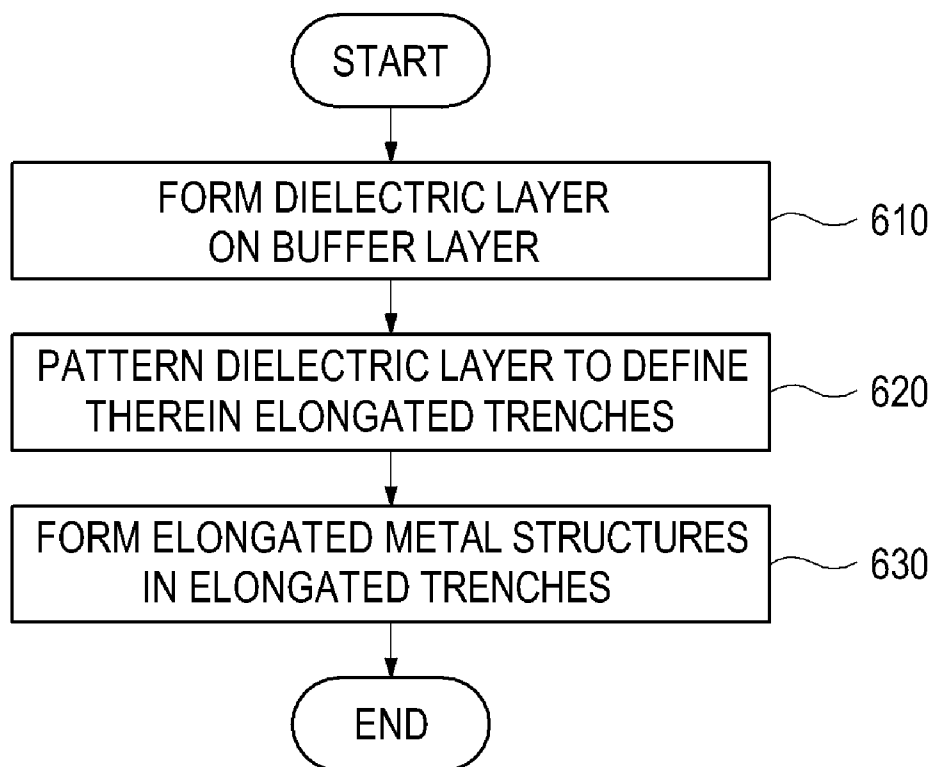


FIG. 7A

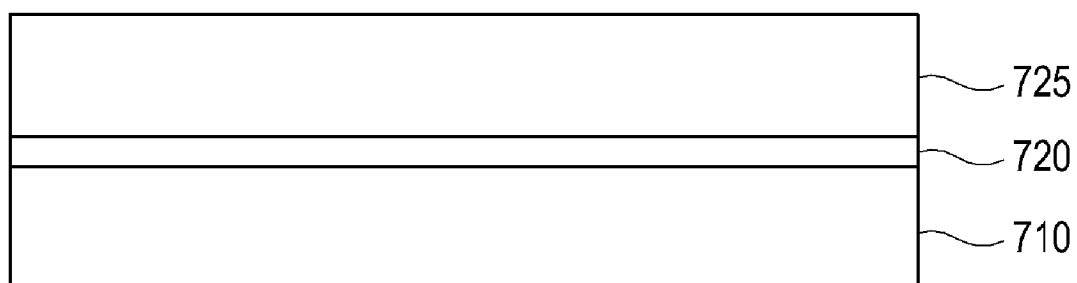


FIG. 7B

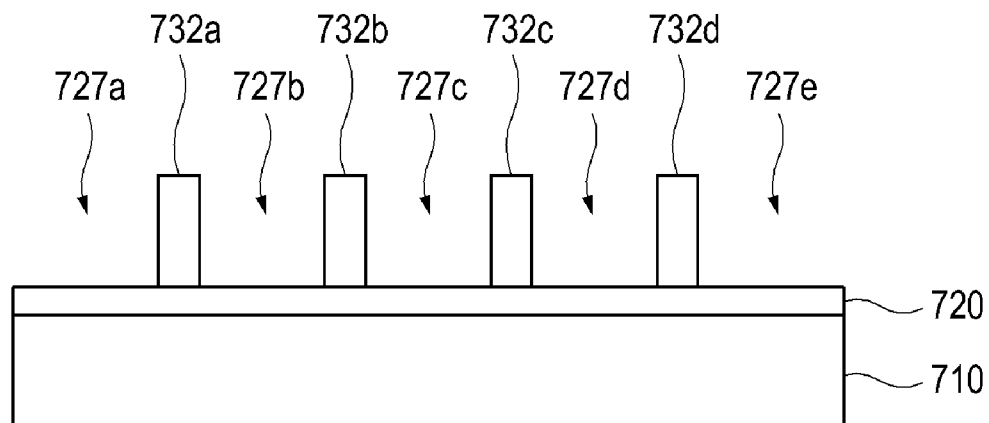


FIG. 7C

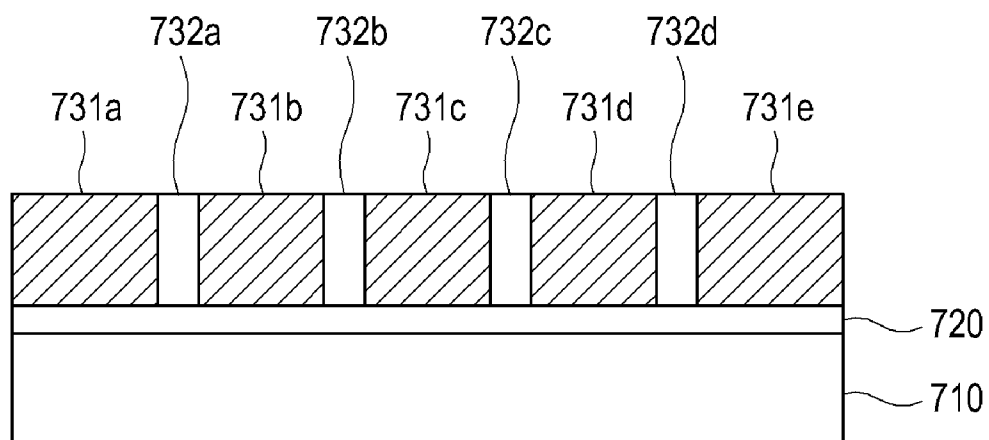


FIG. 8

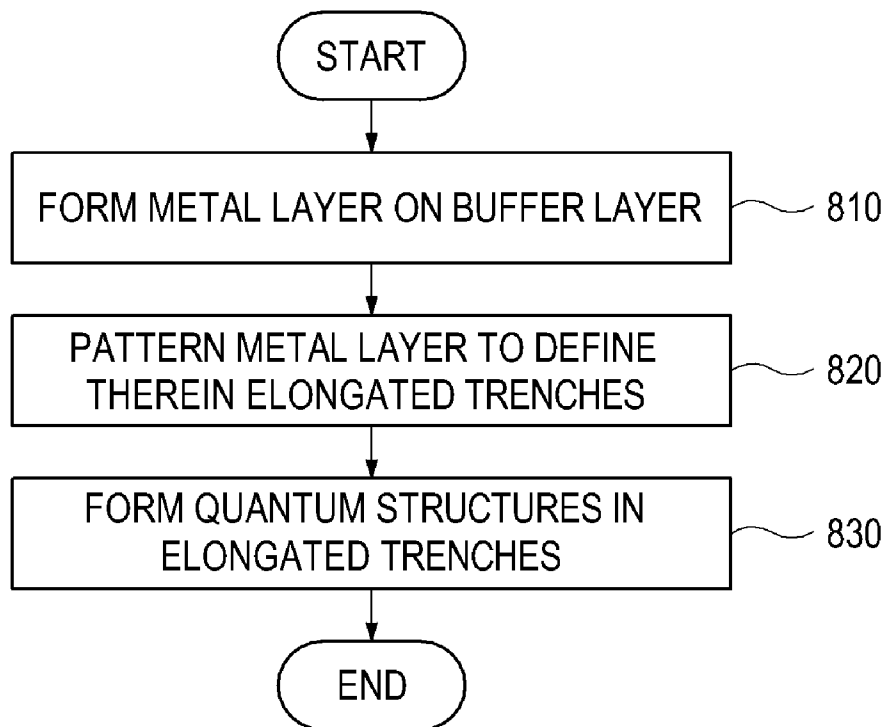


FIG. 9A

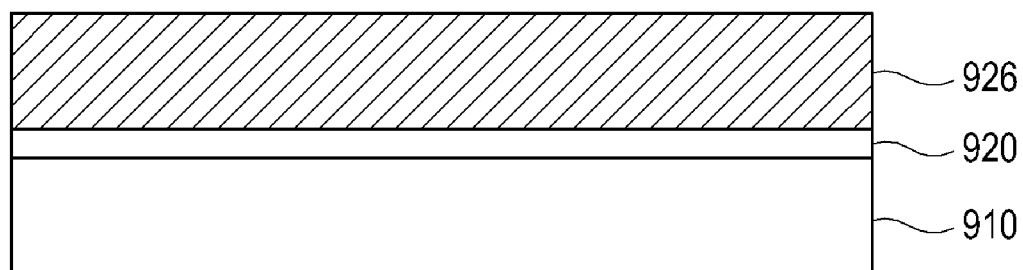


FIG. 9B

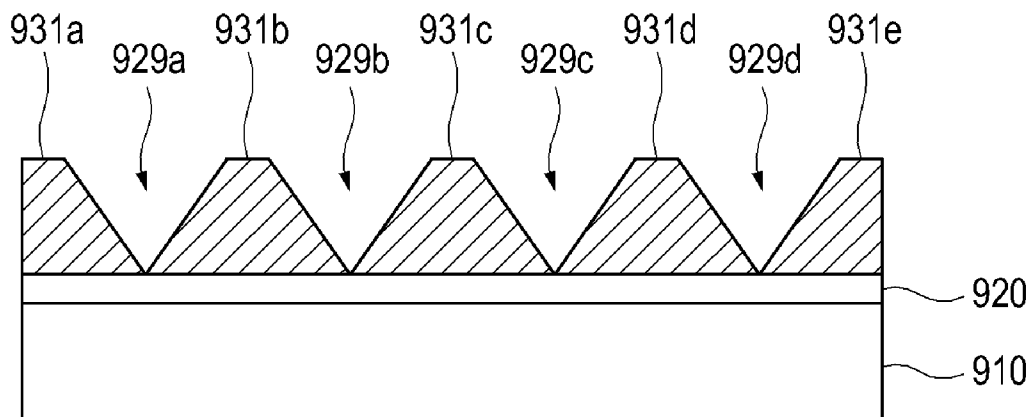


FIG. 9C

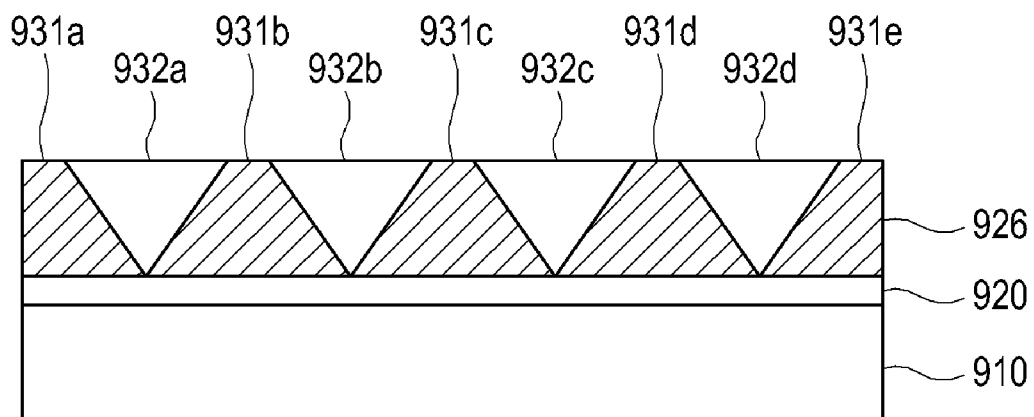


FIG. 10

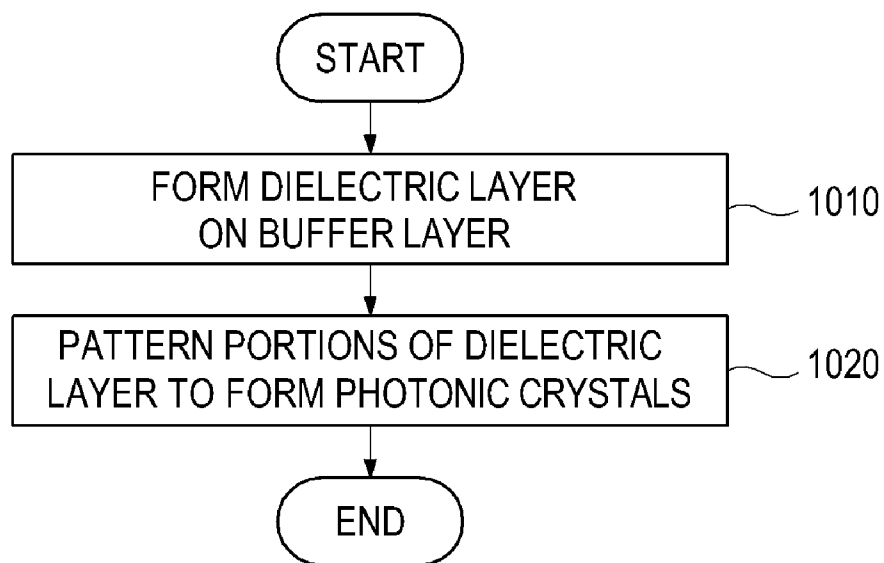


FIG. 11A

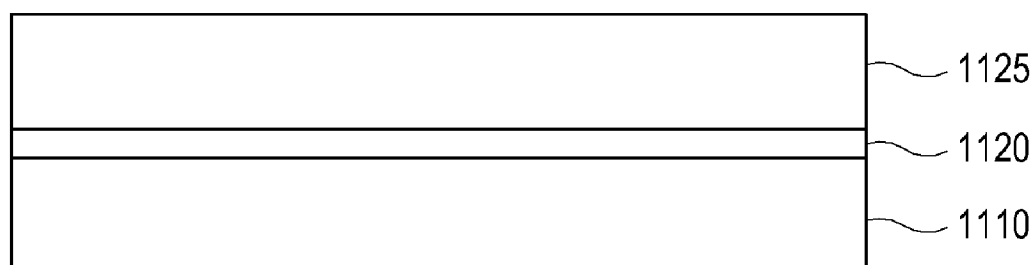
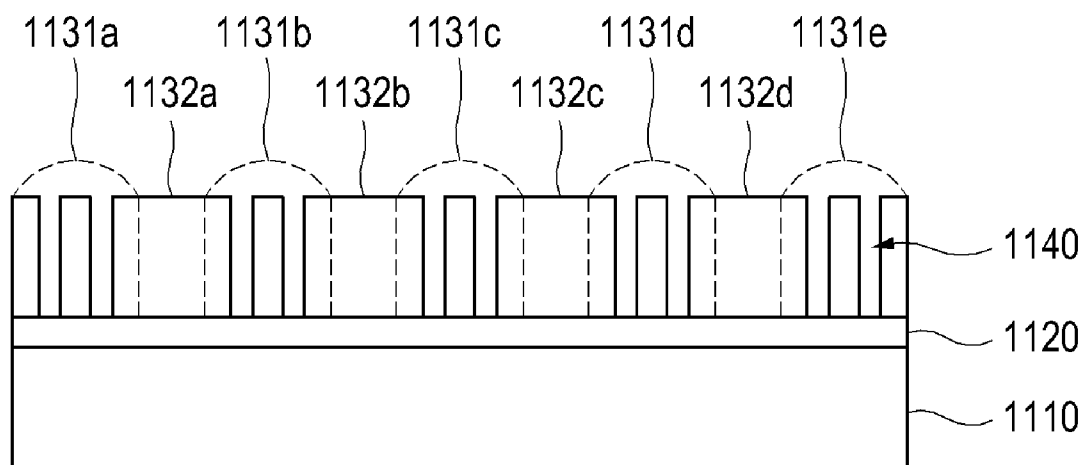


FIG. 11B



POLARITON MODE OPTICAL SWITCH

TECHNICAL FIELD

The described technology generally relates to optical switches and, more particularly, to polariton mode optical switches.

BACKGROUND

Optical switches are commercially important for use in a wide range of applications. For example, multiple optical switches may be used in optical information processing and optical communications.

SUMMARY

Devices, methods, and techniques for frequency-dependent optical switching are provided. In one embodiment, a device includes a substrate, a first and a second optical-field confining structures located on the substrate, and a quantum structure disposed between the first and the second optical-field confining structures. The first optical-field confining structure, which may include a surface to receive photons, and the second optical-field confining structure, which may be spaced apart from the first optical-field confining structure, may be configured to substantially confine therebetween an optical field of the photons.

The foregoing summary is illustrative only and is not intended to be in any way limiting. In addition to the illustrative aspects, embodiments, and features described above, further aspects, embodiments, and features will become apparent by reference to the drawings and the following detailed description.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of an illustrative embodiment of an optical switching device.

FIG. 2 illustrates an electric field between two elongated metal structures of the optical switching device shown in FIG. 1.

FIG. 3 is a perspective view of an illustrative embodiment of an optical switching device with elongated wedge-shaped metal structures.

FIG. 4 is a perspective view of an illustrative embodiment of an optical switching device with photonic crystals.

FIG. 5 is a flow chart of an illustrative embodiment of a method for fabricating a photodiode device.

FIG. 6 is a flow chart of an illustrative embodiment of a method for fabricating an optical switching unit with rectangular metal structures.

FIGS. 7A-7C are a series of diagrams illustrating the method shown in FIG. 6.

FIG. 8 is a flow chart of an illustrative embodiment of a method for fabricating an optical switching device with elongated wedge-shaped metal structures.

FIGS. 9A-9C are a series of diagrams illustrating the method shown in FIG. 8.

FIG. 10 is a flow chart of an illustrative embodiment of a method for fabricating an optical switching unit with photonic crystals.

FIGS. 11A and FIG. 11B are a series of diagrams illustrating the method shown in FIG. 10.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

In the following detailed description, reference is made to the accompanying drawings, which form a part hereof. In the

drawings, similar symbols typically identify similar components, unless context dictates otherwise. The illustrative embodiments described in the detailed description, drawings, and claims are not meant to be limiting. Other embodiments may be utilized, and other changes may be made, without departing from the spirit or scope of the subject matter presented herein. It will be readily understood that the aspects of the present disclosure, as generally described herein, and illustrated in the Figures, can be arranged, substituted, combined, separated, and designed in a wide variety of different configurations, all of which are explicitly contemplated herein.

FIG. 1 is an illustration of a perspective view of an illustrative embodiment of an optical switching device **100**. Referring to FIG. 1, optical switching device **100** may include a substrate **110**, a buffer layer **120** that is located on substrate **110**, and an optical switching unit **130** located on buffer layer **120**.

In one embodiment, substrate **110** may be made of sapphire. In other embodiments, substrate **110** may be made of appropriate semiconductor materials. Examples of such semiconductor materials include, but are not limited to, silicon (Si), germanium (Ge), and gallium arsenide (GaAs). Buffer layer **120** may be made of a material that is substantially lattice-matched to the underlying substrate **110** and/or the overlying optical switching unit **130**. In one embodiment, buffer layer **120** may be made of GaAs, InGaAs, AlGaAs, and/or any other appropriate materials known in the art.

Optical switching unit **130** is configured to receive photons **10** through a portion thereof, determine the wavelength of the received photons **10**, and if the received photons **10** are of a prescribed wavelength, output the received photons **10** of the prescribed wavelength, for example, through another portion thereof. In one embodiment, optical switching unit **130** may include a multiple number of optical-field confining structures, such as optical-field confining structures **131a-131e** (hereinafter collectively referred to as optical-field confining structures **131**), which are spaced apart from each other by a prescribed distance, and a multiple number of quantum structures, such as quantum structures **132a-132d** (hereinafter collectively referred to as quantum structures **132**), which are disposed between optical-field confining structures **131**. Examples of quantum structures **132** include, but are not limited to, a quantum wire and a quantum dot. For example, optical switching unit **130** may receive photons **10** through a surface of optical-field confining structure **131a** (hereinafter referred to as "photon input surface") and, if photons **10** are of a prescribed wavelength, output them (i.e., photons **10** of the prescribed wavelength) through another surface of optical-field confining structure **131d** (hereinafter referred to as "photon output surface"). If photons **10** are not of the prescribed wavelength, optical switching unit **130** does not transmit received photons **10**.

The physical operation of optical switching unit **130** may be qualitatively described as follows. As photons **10** are received through the photon input surface and travel through optical switching unit **130** along the x-axis shown in FIG. 1, optical fields may be respectively produced in quantum structures **132**. These optical fields may lead to coupling of electrons in quantum structures **132** with photons **10** travelling therethrough, to produce polaritons in quantum structures **132**. For ease of explanation, the mode of operation of optical switching unit **130** in which the polaritons are induced in quantum structures **132** will be referred to as a "polariton mode."

Describing the polariton mode in more detail, one of quantum structures **132a-132d** of optical switching unit **130** may have a strongly interacting Bose-Hubbard Hamiltonian of the following form.

$$H = \sum_i H_i^{JC} - \sum_{i,j} K_{ij} a_i^\dagger a_j - \sum_i \mu_i N_i \quad [\text{Equation 1}]$$

where i and j are integers, H_i^{JC} is a Jaynes-Cummings Hamiltonian for the photons and electron(s) at the i^{th} quantum structure, K_{ij} is the coupling constant between the i^{th} and j^{th} quantum structures, μ_i is the chemical potential of the i^{th} quantum structure, N_i is the total number of atomic and photonic excitations in the i^{th} quantum structure, and a_i^\dagger is the creation operator of the photon at the i^{th} quantum structure.

The Jaynes-Cummings Hamiltonian in Equation 1 may be expressed as follows (the subscript “ i ” of H_i^{JC} is omitted for simplicity).

$$H^{JC} = \epsilon \sigma_+ \sigma_- + \omega \alpha^\dagger \alpha + \beta (\sigma_+ \alpha + \sigma_- \alpha^\dagger)$$

where ϵ is the energy level difference between the electronic ground state $|g\rangle$ and the excited state $|e\rangle$ of the i^{th} quantum structure, ω is the photon energy, β is the electron-photon coupling constant, and σ_+ and σ_- respectively are the atomic raising operator $|e\rangle\langle g|$ and the atomic lowering operator $|g\rangle\langle e|$.

Quantum structures **132** may have at least two discrete electron energy level states (e.g., a ground state and an excited state). The energy required to excite the electron in the lower electron energy level state to the higher electron energy level state may be referred to as “transition energy” of a quantum structure. The difference between the transition energy and the energy of photons **10** of a specific wavelength may be referred to as “detuning Δ .” The detuning Δ may be expressed by the following equation.

$$\Delta = \omega - \epsilon \quad [\text{Equation 3}]$$

where ϵ is the energy level difference between the electronic ground state $|g\rangle$ and the excited state $|e\rangle$ of a quantum structure, ω is the energy of the photon inputted to the quantum structure, and Δ is the detuning variable.

Strong optical fields in quantum structures **132** may lead to coupling of an electron(s) in quantum structures **132** with the photon(s) passing therethrough. This produces a dressed state (i.e., a combined state of n photons with excited electron(s), or n polaritons, where n is a natural number) in each of quantum structures **132**, which is an eigenstate of the Jaynes-Cummings Hamiltonian. The n polaritons may be described by the following equations.

$$E_n^\pm = n\omega - \Delta/2 \pm \chi(n), \quad [\text{Equation 4}]$$

$$\chi(n) = \sqrt{\beta^2 n + \Delta^2/4}$$

$$|\pm n\rangle = \frac{[-(\Delta/2 \mp (n))|g, n\rangle + \beta\sqrt{n}|e, n-1\rangle]}{\sqrt{2\chi^2(n) \mp \Delta\chi(n)}}$$

where E_n^* is the polariton energy of the n polaritons, where n is the number of photons, ω is the photon energy, β is the electron-photon coupling constant, Δ is the detuning variable, $|\pm n\rangle$ is the n -polaritons or the polariton state, $|g, n\rangle$ is the state

in which the electron(s) are in the ground state with n photons, and $|e, n-1\rangle$ is the state in which the electron(s) in the excited state are with $n-1$ photons.

When in the polariton mode, optical switching unit **130**, depending on the wavelength of photons **10**, may selectively operate in either a superfluid mode or a mott insulator mode. The superfluid mode is a mode in which photons **10** in one of quantum structures **132** are allowed to hop to an adjacent quantum structure **132**. The mott insulator mode is a mode in which photons **10** in one of quantum structures **132** are not allowed to hop to adjacent quantum structure **132**. When in the superfluid mode, since photons **10** are allowed to hop through quantum structures **132**, optical switching unit **130** may transmit the received photons **10**. On the contrary, when in the mott insulator mode, since photons **10** are not allowed to hop through quantum structures **132**, optical switching unit **130** does not transmit received photons **10**.

The transition between the photon-blockade mode and the superfluid mode is determined by the order parameter

$\Psi = \langle \alpha_i \rangle = \langle n \pm | \alpha_i | n \pm \rangle$. When the angular frequency of photons **10** match that of the transition energy or the electron energy level separation of quantum structures **132** (i.e., when Δ is zero), Ψ is equal to or near zero. In this case, the tunneling of photons **10** through adjacent quantum structures **132** may dominate over the repulsive interactions between photons **10** in quantum structures **132**, and optical switching unit **130** may operate in the superfluid mode. For cases where Δ is not zero, Ψ is not equal to or near zero. In this case, the repulsive interactions between photons **10** may dominate over the tunneling in quantum structures **132**, and optical switching unit **130** may operate in the mott-insulator mode.

In one embodiment, quantum structures **132** may be made of one or more materials selected from the group consisting essentially of Group II-VI semiconductor compounds and Group III-V semiconductor compounds. In another embodiment, quantum structures **132** may be made of $\text{Cd}_x\text{Zn}_{1-x}\text{S}$, where the value of x is between 0.5 and 1.0. In other embodiments, quantum structures **132** may be made of $\text{CdSe}_x\text{S}_{1-x}$, where the value of x is between 0 and 1.

Optical switching unit **130** may be controlled by using a control light signal. For example, a control light signal of a prescribed wavelength may be supplied in conjunction with a data light signal of another prescribed wavelength. If the combined energy of the control light signal and the data light signal is substantially equal to the transition energy of quantum structures **132** (i.e., Δ is zero), then the control light signal and the data light signal may pass through optical switching unit **130**. If the combined energy of the control light signal and the data light signal is not substantially equal to the transition energy, then the control light signal and the data light signal may be blocked by optical switching unit **130**. The wavelength of the control light signal may be varied to selectively perform on/off switching on the data light signal of a prescribed wavelength.

Optical switching unit **130** may perform as an optical switch if the optical field of photons **10** travelling therethrough are confined in quantum structures **132**. This is because stronger optical fields in quantum structures **132** may help optical switching unit **130** to operate in the polariton mode, and thus, operate as a wavelength-selective optical switch. Optical-field confining structures **131** disposed between quantum structures **132** may assist in better confining the optical fields to quantum structures **132**.

In one embodiment, as shown in FIG. 1, optical-field confining structures **131** may include multiple elongated metal

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structures **131a-131e** spaced apart by a prescribed distance. In some embodiments, the spacing may be uniform. For example, among the elongated metal structures, the spacing between any two adjacent elongated metal structures (e.g., optical-field confining structures **131a** and **131b**) may be the same as the spacing between any other two adjacent elongated metal structures (e.g., optical-field confining structures **131c** and **131d**). In other embodiments, the spacing between any two adjacent elongated metal structures may be substantially different than the spacing between any other two adjacent elongated metal structures. Hereinafter, optical-field confining structures **131** will also be referred to as elongated metal structures **131**. Two of elongated metal structures **131** can function as a surface plasmon waveguide. FIG. 2 illustrates an electric field between two elongated metal structures **131** (e.g., optical-field confining structures **131a** and **131b**) of optical switching device **100** shown in FIG. 1. Referring to FIG. 2, the electric fields confined between elongated metal structures **131a** and **131b** shown in FIG. 1 may be explained by Equation 5 shown below.

$$\frac{D_{x_quantum}}{D_{x_metal}} = \frac{\epsilon_{quantum} E_{x_quantum}}{\epsilon_{metal} E_{x_metal}} = 1 \quad [\text{Equation 5}]$$

$$\therefore \frac{E_{x_quantum}}{E_{x_metal}} = \frac{\epsilon_{metal}}{\epsilon_{quantum}}$$

where D_{x_metal} is an electric displacement field in elongated metal structure **131a** or **131b** along the x-axis, $D_{x_quantum}$ is an electric displacement field in quantum structure **132** along the x-axis, E_{x_metal} is an electric field in elongated metal structure **131a** or **131b** along the x-axis, $E_{x_quantum}$ is an electric field in quantum structure **132** along the x-axis, and ϵ_{metal} is the permittivity of elongated metal structure **131a** or **131b**, and $\epsilon_{dielectric}$ is the permittivity of quantum structure **132**.

As can be seen in FIG. 2 and from Equation 5, the electric field of photons **10** confined between elongated metal structures **131a** and **131b** (i.e., in quantum structure **132a**) is proportional to the ratio between the permittivity of elongated metal structure **131a** or **131b** and the permittivity of quantum structure **132a**. Thus, the desired confinement of the electrical field may be obtained by selecting the material(s) of appropriate permittivity for metals structures **131a** and **131b** and/or quantum structure **132a**. It should be appreciated that elongated metal structures **131a** and **131b** were selected for ease of explanation, and that the description of the electric field between two elongated metal structures **131** is applicable to any two adjacent elongated metal structures **131** of optical switching unit **130**, assuming that the optical-field confining structures **131** are elongated metal structures spaced apart by the same prescribed distance.

In one embodiment, elongated metal structures **131** may include one or more various kinds of metals. The permittivity of a metal is a function of frequency, and thus, the metal-type used may depend on the frequency or wavelength of photons **10** that are to be transmitted by optical switching unit **130**. In one embodiment, elongated metal structures **131** may include a metal with a proper permittivity for a specific spectrum (e.g. the blue spectrum). For example, elongated metal structures **131** may include one or compounds of Ag, Al, Au, Ni, Ti, or any other appropriate metal.

Considering the fact that the permittivity of a metal is generally much higher than that of a dielectric material (e.g., the material of quantum structures **132**), the arrangement of elongated metal structures **131** may generally enable a strong

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confinement of the electric field of photons **10**. This holds true even for the case where two adjacent elongated metal structures **131** are spaced apart by a distance smaller than the wavelength of photons **10**. In one embodiment, two adjacent elongated metal structures **131** may be spaced apart by a distance equal to or smaller than the wavelength of the photons that are to be transmitted by optical switching unit **130**. In another embodiment, two adjacent elongated metal structures **131** may be spaced apart by a distance equal to or smaller than one quarter the wavelength of the incident photons that are to be transmitted by optical switching unit **130**. For example, in cases where the frequency of the photons to be transmitted by optical switching unit **130** is about tm, optical switching unit **130** may be fabricated in a manner such that adjacent elongated metal structures **131** are spaced apart by a distance smaller than about 250 nm. In some embodiments, adjacent elongated metal structures **131** may be spaced apart by a distance that is in the range from about a few nanometers to a few hundred nanometers. Elongated metal structures **131** illustrated in FIG. 1 are in contact with quantum structures **132**. In other embodiments, however, elongated metal structures **131** may be spaced apart from quantum structures **132** such that the distance between adjacent elongated metal structures **131** is larger than the width of quantum structures **132**. In some embodiments, the width of quantum structures **132** may be in the range of a few nanometers.

Optical switching device **100** described hitherto in conjunction with FIG. 1 employs elongated metal structures **131** of a rectangular shape as its optical-field confining structures. However, it should be appreciated that an optical switching device in accordance with the present disclosure may include metal structures of a different shape. For example, the optical-field confining structures may include at least two elongated wedge-shaped metal structures. In this regard, FIG. 3 illustrates a perspective view of an illustrative embodiment of an optical switching device **300** with elongated wedge-shaped metal structures **331a-331e**. Similar to optical switching device **100** illustrated in FIG. 1, optical switching device **300** may include a substrate **310**, a buffer layer **320** located on substrate **310**, and an optical switching unit **330** located on buffer layer **320**. Optical switching unit **330** may include multiple elongated wedge-shaped metal structures **331a-331e**, and multiple quantum structures **332a-332d** with a triangular cross-section disposed between elongated wedge-shaped metal structures **331a-331e**.

Further, the optical-field confining structures of the present disclosure are not limited to the at least two metal structures acting as a surface plasmon waveguide(s). In some embodiments, photonic crystals may be employed as the optical-field confining structures. In this regard, FIG. 4 illustrates a perspective view of an illustrative embodiment of an optical switching device **400** with such photonic crystals **431a-431e**. Similar to optical switching device **100** illustrated in FIG. 1, optical switching device **400** may include a substrate **410**, a buffer layer **420** located on substrate **410**, and an optical switching unit **430** located on buffer layer **420**. Optical switching unit **430** may include multiple photonic crystals **431a-431e**, and multiple quantum structures **432a-432d** disposed between photonic crystals **431a-431e**.

Photonic crystals **431a-431e** may include multiple dielectric or metallo-dielectric nanostructures. In one embodiment, as illustrated in FIG. 4, photonic crystals **431a-431e** may be a dielectric structure with a multiple number of holes **440** defined therein. In one embodiment, holes **440** may be spaced apart by the same prescribed distance. The diameter of holes **440** may be in the nanometer range. In other embodiments, however, other types of photonic crystals may be employed.

For example, photonic crystals with multiple nanorods spaced apart by the same distance may be used. The above arrangement of photonic crystals **431a-431e** may effectively confine the optical field of photons therebetween.

The aforementioned optical switching devices may be fabricated in a variety of ways, some of which are explained hereafter. FIG. 5 is a flow chart of an illustrative embodiment of a method for fabricating an optical switching device. Referring to FIG. 5, in block **510**, a substrate is prepared for the formation of an optical switching unit thereon. In block **520**, a buffer layer is formed on the substrate, and in block **530**, the optical switching unit is formed on the buffer layer. The optical switching unit may include multiple optical-field confining structures located on the substrate and spaced apart from each other, and at least one quantum structure made of a dielectric material disposed between multiple optical-field confining structures.

The buffer layer and the optical switching unit may be formed on the substrate by using one or any combination of suitable deposition, etching, and/or photolithographic techniques. Examples of suitable deposition techniques include, but are not limited to, chemical deposition techniques (e.g., chemical vapor deposition (CVD), plasma enhanced CVD (PECVD)), physical deposition techniques (e.g., physical vapor deposition (PVD), and other deposition techniques (e.g., molecular beam epitaxy (MBE)). Examples of suitable etching techniques include, but are not limited to, wet etching, anisotropic etching, and plasma etching. The particular processes performed in forming the optical switching unit may vary depending on the type and shape of the optical-field confining structures and the quantum structures to be fabricated. Hereafter, example methods for fabricating each of the optical switching units illustrated in FIGS. 1, 3, and 4 are described.

One skilled in the art will appreciate that, for this and other processes and methods disclosed herein, the functions performed in the processes and methods may be implemented in differing order. Furthermore, the outlined steps and operations are only provided as examples, and some of the steps and operations may be optional, combined into fewer steps and operations, or expanded into additional steps and operations without detracting from the essence of the disclosed embodiments.

FIG. 6 is a flow chart of an illustrative embodiment of a method for fabricating an optical switching unit with rectangular metal structures. FIGS. 7A-7C are a series of diagrams illustrating the method shown in FIG. 6. Referring to FIG. 6, in block **610** a dielectric layer **725** is formed on a buffer layer **720** that is disposed on a substrate **710**, as shown in FIG. 7A. In one embodiment, dielectric layer **725** may be formed by depositing dielectric material on buffer layer **720**. In block **620**, as shown in FIG. 7B, dielectric layer **725** is patterned to define therein elongated trenches **727a-727e**, thereby forming a multiple number of quantum structures **732a-732d** on buffer layer **720**. The above patterning process may be performed by using appropriate masking and/or etching processes known in the art. In block **630**, as shown in FIG. 7C, elongated rectangular metal structures **731a-731e** are respectively formed in trenches **727a-727e**. The above elongated rectangular metal structure forming process may be performed by using appropriate masking and/or deposition processes known in the art.

FIG. 8 is a flow chart of an illustrative embodiment of a method for fabricating an optical switching device with elongated wedge-shaped metal structures. FIGS. 9A-9C are a series of diagrams illustrating the method shown in FIG. 8. Referring to FIG. 8, in block **810** a metal layer **926** is formed

on a buffer layer **920** that is disposed on a substrate **910**, as shown in FIG. 9A. For example, metal layer **926** may be deposited on buffer layer **920** by using suitable deposition techniques known in the art. In block **820**, as shown in FIG. 9B, metal layer **926** is patterned to define therein a multiple number of wedge-shaped trenches **929a-929d**, thereby forming elongated wedge-shaped metal structures **931a-931e** on buffer layer **920**. For example, metal layer **926** may be patterned by using suitable masking and/or etching techniques known in the art. In block **830**, as shown in FIG. 9C, quantum structures **932a-932d** may be respectively formed in trenches **929a-929d**. For example, quantum structures **932a-932d** may be formed by using suitable masking and deposition techniques known in the art.

FIG. 10 is a flow chart of an illustrative embodiment of a method for fabricating an optical switching unit with photonic crystals in accordance with another illustrative embodiment. FIGS. 11A and 11B are a series of diagrams illustrating the method shown in FIG. 10. Referring to FIG. 10, in block **1010**, a dielectric layer **1125** is formed on a buffer layer **1120** that is disposed on a substrate **1110**, as shown in FIG. 11A. In block **1020**, as shown in FIG. 11B, portions of dielectric layer **1125** are patterned to define a multiple number of holes **1140**, thereby forming photonic crystals **1131a-1131e**. The unpatterned portions function as quantum structures **1132a-1132d**. For example, portions of dielectric layer **1125** may be patterned using appropriate masking and/or etching techniques known in the art.

The present disclosure is not to be limited in terms of the particular embodiments described in this application, which are intended as illustrations of various aspects. Many modifications and variations can be made without departing from its spirit and scope, as will be apparent to those skilled in the art. Functionally equivalent methods and apparatuses within the scope of the disclosure, in addition to those enumerated herein, will be apparent to those skilled in the art from the foregoing descriptions. Such modifications and variations are intended to fall within the scope of the appended claims. The present disclosure is to be limited only by the terms of the appended claims, along with the full scope of equivalents to which such claims are entitled. It is to be understood that this disclosure is not limited to particular methods, reagents, compounds compositions or biological systems, which can, of course, vary. It is also to be understood that the terminology used herein is for the purpose of describing particular embodiments only, and is not intended to be limiting.

With respect to the use of substantially any plural and/or singular terms herein, those having skill in the art can translate from the plural to the singular and/or from the singular to the plural as is appropriate to the context and/or application. The various singular/plural permutations may be expressly set forth herein for sake of clarity.

It will be understood by those within the art that, in general, terms used herein, and especially in the appended claims (e.g. bodies of the appended claims) are generally intended as "open" terms (e.g., the term "including" should be interpreted as "including but not limited to," the term "having" should be interpreted as "having at least," the term "includes" should be interpreted as "includes but is not limited to," etc.). It will be further understood by those within the art that if a specific number of an introduced claim recitation is intended, such an intent will be explicitly recited in the claim, and in the absence of such recitation no such intent is present. For example, as an aid to understanding, the following appended claims may contain usage of the introductory phrases "at least one" and "one or more" to introduce claim recitations. However, the use of such phrases should not be construed to imply that the

introduction of a claim recitation by the indefinite articles “a” or “an” limits any particular claim containing such introduced claim recitation to embodiments containing only one such recitation, even when the same claim includes the introductory phrases “one or more” or “at least one” and indefinite articles such as “a” or “an” (e.g. “a” and/or “an” should be interpreted to mean “at least one” or “one or more”); the same holds true for the use of definite articles used to introduce claim recitations. In addition, even if a specific number of an introduced claim recitation is explicitly recited, those skilled in the art will recognize that such recitation should be interpreted to mean at least the recited number (e.g., the bare recitation of “two recitations,” without other modifiers, means at least two recitations, or two or more recitations). Furthermore, in those instances where a convention analogous to “at least one of A, B, and C, etc.” is used, in general such a construction is intended in the sense one having skill in the art would understand the convention (e.g. “a system having at least one of A, B, and C” would include but not be limited to systems that have A alone, B alone, C alone, A and B together, A and C together, B and C together, and/or A, B, and C together, etc.). In those instances where a convention analogous to “at least one of A, B, or C, etc.” is used, in general such a construction is intended in the sense one having skill in the art would understand the convention (e.g. “a system having at least one of A, B, or C” would include but not be limited to systems that have A alone, B alone, C alone, A and B together, A and C together, B and C together, and/or A, B, and C together, etc.). It will be further understood by those within the art that virtually any disjunctive word and/or phrase presenting two or more alternative terms, whether in the description, claims, or drawings, should be understood to contemplate the possibilities of including one of the terms, either of the terms, or both terms. For example, the phrase “A or B” will be understood to include the possibilities of “A” or “B” or “A and B.”

In addition, where features or aspects of the disclosure are described in terms of Markush groups, those skilled in the art will recognize that the disclosure is also thereby described in terms of any individual member or subgroup of members of the Markush group.

As will be understood by one skilled in the art, for any and all purposes, such as in terms of providing a written description, all ranges disclosed herein also encompass any and all possible subranges and combinations of subranges thereof. Any listed range can be easily recognized as sufficiently describing and enabling the same range being broken down into at least equal halves, thirds, quarters, fifths, tenths, etc. As a non-limiting example, each range discussed herein can be readily broken down into a lower third, middle third and upper third, etc. As will also be understood by one skilled in the art all language such as “up to,” “at least,” and the like include the number recited and refer to ranges which can be subsequently broken down into subranges as discussed above. Finally, as will be understood by one skilled in the art, a range includes each individual member. Thus, for example, a group having 1-3 cells refers to groups having 1, 2, or 3 cells. Similarly, a group having 1-5 cells refers to groups having 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 cells, and so forth.

From the foregoing, it will be appreciated that various embodiments of the present disclosure have been described herein for purposes of illustration, and that various modifications may be made without departing from the scope and spirit of the present disclosure. Accordingly, the various embodiments disclosed herein are not intended to be limiting, with the true scope and spirit being indicated by the following claims.

The invention claimed is:

1. A device comprising:

a substrate;

a first and a second optical-field confining structures located on the substrate, the first optical-field confining structure comprising a surface to receive photons, the second optical-field confining structure spaced apart from the first optical-field confining structure; and a quantum structure disposed between the first and second optical-field confining structures, wherein the first and the second optical-field confining structures are configured to substantially confine therebetween an optical field of the photons.

2. The device of claim 1, wherein the quantum structure is configured to selectively operate in a mott insulator mode and a superfluid mode depending on a wavelength of the received photons.

3. The device of claim 1, wherein at least one of the first and the second optical-field confining structures is in contact with the quantum structure.

4. The device of claim 1, wherein at least one of the first and the second optical-field confining structures is spaced apart from the quantum structure.

5. The device of claim 1, wherein the first and the second optical-field confining structures are spaced apart by a distance equal to or less than a wavelength of the photons.

6. The device of claim 4, wherein the first and the second optical-field confining structures are of a thickness equal to or less than one quarter of the wavelength of the photons.

7. The device of claim 1, wherein the first and the second optical-field confining structures are elongated metal structures.

8. The device of claim 7, wherein the elongated metal structures are rectangular metal structures.

9. The device of claim 7, wherein the elongated metal structures are wedge-shaped metal structures.

10. The device of claim 7, wherein the elongated metal structures are made of at least one material selected from the group consisting essentially of Ag, Al, Au, Ni, and Ti.

11. The device of claim 1, wherein the first and the second optical-field confining structures are photonic crystals.

12. The device of claim 1, wherein the quantum structure is made of one or more materials selected from the group consisting essentially of Group II-VI semiconductor compounds and Group III-V semiconductor compounds.

13. The device of claim 1, wherein the quantum structure is made of $\text{Cd}_x\text{Zn}_{1-x}\text{S}$, where the value of x is between 0.5 and 1.0.

14. The device of claim 1, wherein the quantum structure is made of $\text{CdSe}_x\text{S}_{1-x}$, where the value of x is between 0 and 1.

15. The device of claim 1, further comprising a buffer layer disposed between the substrate and the first and the second optical-field confining structures.

16. An optical switching device, the device comprising:

a substrate; and

an optical switching unit located on the substrate, the optical switching unit including:

a plurality of quantum structures;

a plurality of optical-confining structures located on first and second sides of each of the plurality of optical-field confining structures;

a photon input surface; and

a photon output surface,

wherein the plurality of quantum structures, the plurality of optical confining structures, the photon input surface and the photon output surface are cooperatively configured such that optical fields produced in each of the

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quantum structures are effective to enable photons received at the photon input surface to hop through the quantum structures and be transmitted through the optical switching unit to the photon output surface.

17. The device of claim 16, wherein one of the optical-confining structures includes the photon input surface and another of the optical-confining structures includes the photon output surface.

18. The device of claim 17, wherein the optical switching unit selectively operates in a superfluid mode or a mott insulator mode depending on a wavelength of photons received in the optical switching unit.

19. The device of claim 17, wherein the optical confining structures are spaced apart by a predetermined distance.

20. The device of claim 19, wherein the predetermined distance is substantially the same for each two adjacent optical-confining structures or is different for at least some of the adjacent optical-confining structures.

21. The device of claim 17, wherein the optical-confining structures include metal.

22. The device of claim 21, wherein a permittivity of the metal is configured for a specific spectrum of wavelength to be transmitted through the optical switching unit.

23. The device of claim 21, wherein the optical switching unit transmits a data light signal when a combined energy of

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the data light signal and a control signal is substantially equal to a transition energy of the quantum structures.

24. An optical switching device, the device comprising:

a substrate;

a plurality of optical-confining structures formed on the substrate and configured to operate as surface plasmon waveguides, the plurality of optical-confining structures including a photon input surface and a photon output surface;

a plurality of quantum structures separating the optical-confining structures, wherein the plurality of optical-confining structures and the plurality of quantum structures are configured to transmit photons having wavelengths in a specific spectrum.

25. The device of claim 24, the wavelengths in the specific spectrum are transmitted when a combined energy of a data signal and a control signal is substantially equal to a transition energy of the quantum structures.

26. The device of claim 24, wherein the plurality of optical-confining structures are metal.

27. The device of claim 26, wherein the optical-confining structures have a permittivity selected for the specific spectrum.

* * * * *

UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE
CERTIFICATE OF CORRECTION

PATENT NO. : 8,063,396 B2
APPLICATION NO. : 12/432967
DATED : November 22, 2011
INVENTOR(S) : Ahn

Page 1 of 1

It is certified that error appears in the above-identified patent and that said Letters Patent is hereby corrected as shown below:

On the Title Page, in item (56), under "OTHER PUBLICATIONS", in Column 2, Line 5,
delete "inGaN" and insert -- in GaN --, therefor.

In Column 1, Line 67, delete "hereof" and insert -- hereof. --, therefor.

In Column 2, Line 48, delete "13 la" and insert -- 131a --, therefor.

In Column 6, Line 13, delete "tm," and insert -- 1 μ m, --, therefor.

In Column 6, Line 24, delete "lager" and insert -- larger --, therefor.

In Column 8, Line 54, delete "(e.g." and insert -- (e.g., --, therefor.

In Column 9, Line 6, delete "(e.g." and insert -- (e.g., --, therefor.

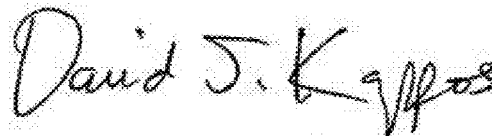
In Column 9, Line 18, delete "(e.g." and insert -- (e.g., --, therefor.

In Column 9, Line 25, delete "(e.g." and insert -- (e.g., --, therefor.

In Column 9, Line 45, delete "thereof" and insert -- thereof. --, therefor.

In Column 12, Line 18, in Claim 25, delete "f the" and insert -- of the --, therefor.

Signed and Sealed this
Twelfth Day of June, 2012

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David J. Kappos". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "D".

David J. Kappos
Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office